



# News Release

---

**For immediate release:** September 5, 2012

(12-132)

Contact: [Kate Lynch](#), Communications Office

360-236-4072

## **Shelton's Oakland Bay water quality improves, leads to shellfish upgrades**

*Department of Health upgrades 750 acres of shellfish beds*

**OLYMPIA** — Improvements to Shelton's wastewater treatment plant, onsite septic systems, and farm practices have led state health officials to upgrade 750 acres of shellfish beds in [Oakland Bay near Shelton in Mason County](#). This progress has allowed the state Department of Health to change the classification from "conditionally approved" to "approved."

Oakland Bay is home to 19 commercial shellfish companies and a public shellfish beach at Bayshore. The bay's protected waters also make it an ideal port for Shelton, which it has been for more than 100 years. The bay is typical of many in South Puget Sound where the waters flush slowly, leaving them more vulnerable to human activities.

"This is a prime example of how successful we can be when communities pull together to protect and improve sensitive, important resources," said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. "We can all take pride in the results of that teamwork at Oakland Bay."

Before this shellfish classification change, the central part of the bay was closed after heavy rainfall because the rain caused runoff from local farms, industry, and private septic systems. Rainfall also sometimes overloaded the Shelton wastewater system.

Mason County created a Shellfish Protection District around Oakland Bay in 2007 because water quality had declined. This group led the work that resulted in noticeable improvement of marine water quality. The City of Shelton upgraded the Shelton Wastewater Treatment Plant and its sewage collection system to reduce impacts on shellfish harvesting areas.

The Squaxin Island Tribe, shellfish growers, and hundreds of property owners joined the effort to improve water quality, and the successful collaboration led to this upgraded classification.

Higher bacteria levels still affect the northern part of the bay and Chapman Cove after heavy rainfall. [These areas are closed to harvesting](#) when one or more inches of rain falls in 24-hours.

The Department of Health is responsible for the safety of commercial shellfish harvested in the state. The agency's Office of Shellfish and Water Protection uses national standards to classify all commercial shellfish harvesting areas.

The [Department of Health website](#) (doh.wa.gov) is your source for *a healthy dose of information*.

Also, [find us on Facebook](#) and [follow us on Twitter](#).

###